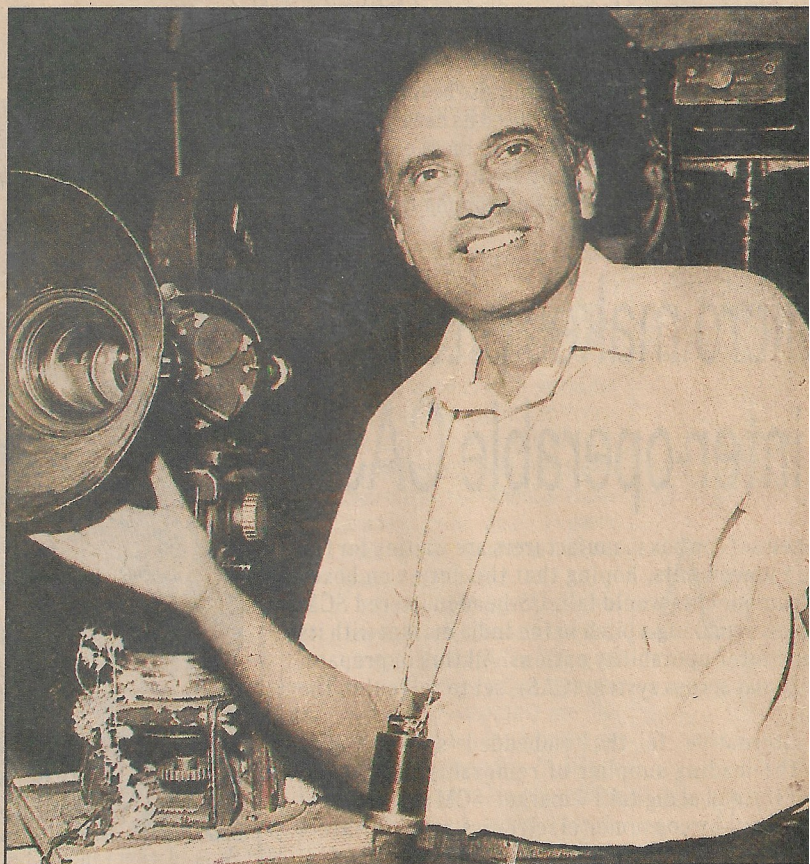


A SMALL town boy from Meerut (U.P.), the young Devendra Goel was in many ways no different from millions of his film-struck contemporaries, eager to be part of the film industry. Devendra Goel, though, had two qualities going for him - an M.A. degree (Politics) and a fluency in English, both rare commodities at the time. And on the basis of the two, the young man secured a job as a publicity officer, (English Language) in the well-established film-production concern, Fazli Brothers. Soon, he made the switch to direction.

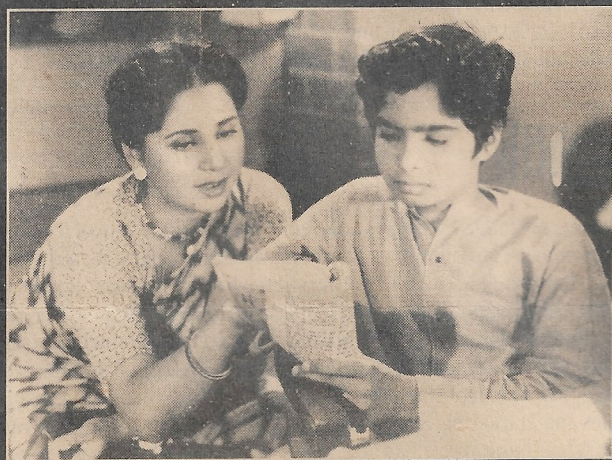
As the junior-most assistant to Siptain Fazli, the youthful and unassuming boy didn't always have it easy. A senior assistant in the same department took to continuously deriding and ribbing the raw but disconcertingly quick-learning new recruit. His constant refrain being 'M.A. karne se direction nahi aati' (an M.A. degree doesn't qualify you to become a director). One day the boss himself, veteran director Siptain Fazli, cautioned his senior assis-

Devendra Goel earned accolades from a very young age. He directed Aankhen, his debut film, when he was in his twenties. The film was a big hit and Goel never looked back. Devendra Goel's son Ajay Goel pays a tribute to his father on his 25th death anniversary. A profile on the filmmaker will be telecast on March 2, at 10 p.m., DD National Network



DEVENDRA GOEL

Star-MA



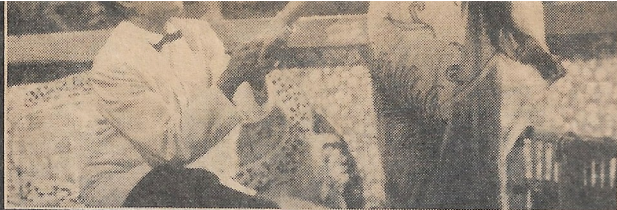
Vachan - 1955



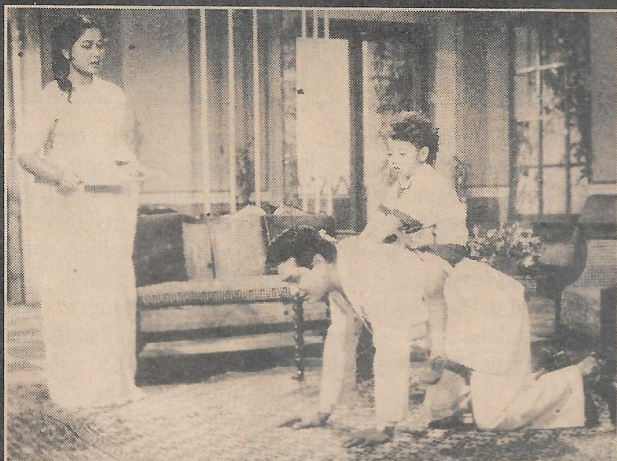
tant, 'Better cut out the taunts this boy will be employing you before long.' Soon, that's exactly what happened. Devendra Goel, never a man to hold a grudge, did employ the same senior assistant years later for a while, and shared a perfectly good professional rapport with his erstwhile senior.

To go back to the story, the earnest and committed young man from Meerut rose rapidly through the ranks, his inherent talent and aptitude for the film-medium being honed as he learned the intricacies of the craft of filmmaking. While still in his twenties Devendra Goel launched his first film *Aankhen* as an independent producer-director in 1948. Starring Nalini Jaywant and Shekhar, with music by Madan Mohan, the film started his lifelong practice of unearthing and nurturing fresh talent - both Shekhar and Madan Mohan were introduced in *Aankhen*. The debutant director hit the bull's-eye in his first attempt; *Aankhen* was a silver jubilee hit all over India. Years later when asked if he had taken a risk in introducing not just a new producer and director - himself - in *Aankhen*, but a new leading man and a new music-director too, Devendra Goel quipped with the customary twinkle in his eye, "Fortunately I was too young to realise the risk I was running."

His banner Goel Cine Corporation credibly established Devendra Goel had made it. His next two films were *Ada* and *Aas*. *Aas* (1952) with an unusual and compelling theme of a kind-hearted stepmother was a major hit, with Kamini Kaushal playing the leading role. The youthful director was by now a busy mainstream professional. His steadily rising career-graph allowed him to marry his fiancée Raj Sadanah, a Punjabi girl from Lahore. An M.A. herself, Devendra Goel's wife Raj, also possessed strong writing skills and became a significant contributor to the



Ek Saal - 1958



Chirag Kahan Roshni Kahan - 1959

Aadmi Sadak Ka
presented the theme of
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film into a preachy and
moralistic exercise

The desire of discovering and presenting outstanding new talent hit a highpoint in Devendra Goel's next film *Vachan*. An all-India silver jubilee hit, *Vachan* introduced leading-man Rajendra Kumar and music director Ravi. Asha Bhonsle too sang her first Hindi song - '*Chanda mama door se...*' for this film. *Vachan* also had another hit number '*O babu ek paisa de de...*'.

Goel Cine Corporation, the banner, and Devendra Goel, the maker, soon became associated with films of various kinds where quality was given utmost importance. *Albeli*, a comedy starring Geeta Bali and Pradeep Kumar; *Narsi Bhagat*, a devotional musical with haunting bhajans; and *Ek Saal* a dark, psychological crime-cum-love-story, followed in quick succession. *Ek Saal* was once again a musical tour-de-force, with the haunting number '*Sub kuchh luta ke hosh me aayen...*' immortalised on screen in two versions - a pensive, remorseful Talat Mahmood solo, pictured on leading-man Ashok Kumar, and a fiery, challenging Lata Mangeshkar version, filmed on leading lady Madhubala in a shattering climactic situation. But *Ek Saal* was much more than just a vehicle for its haunting music. Even viewed today, the power of the film, with its complex themes of love under the shadow of death, betrayal, and remorse, resonate across a span of almost half a century. Ashok Kumar's performance as a con-man tormented by his conscience is - possibly - his greatest performance ever.

In 1959, Devendra Goel created what many considered to be his finest work *Chirag Kahan Roshni Kahan*. A searingly emotional story about a mother's love for her child, and her trauma when the child is taken away from her, *Chirag Kahan Roshni Kahan* was a film that captivated the Indian women. Meena Kumari's towering performance as a vulnerable but resolute mother made to confront the fact that her child is not her own, Rajendra Kumar's sensitive rendition of a young doctor caught between the conflicting demands of moral duty and personal loyalty, and haunting songs like '*Tim tim kartey taarey...*' together created the kind of enduring screen magic, that became a paradigm for the genre of the 'emotional film'. *Chirag Kahan Roshni Kahan*'s thundering box-office success was matched by a critical appreciation seldom accorded to mainstream Hindi cinema. A contemporary review said it all when it wrote, '*Chirag Kahan Roshni Kahan* proves that miracles still do happen in Hindi cinema.'

Devendra Goel spent little time savouring the triumph of *Chirag Kahan Roshni Kahan*. Once again with the same star-pair Meena Kumari and Rajendra Kumar, he came up with another solid emotional work in *Pyaar Ka Sagar*. Musically, perhaps the strongest film from the Goel Cine Corporation banner, virtually every song of *Pyaar Ka Sagar* was a chart-topper. '*Mujhe pyar ki zindagi...*', '*Wafaa jinsay ki...*', '*Sada khush rahe tu...*' and the title-track '*Pyaar Ka Sagar...*' continue, after forty years, to be instantly recognisable to music-lovers, a surprising number of them being younger audiences who rediscovered the songs over the years.

The film-industry has its own subtle ways of according recognition. Somewhere around the early 1960s, Devendra Goel, still barely 40 years old, came to be called Goel *sahab* by his colleagues. It was a term of respect, as much for his personal attributes of integrity and moral

FILMOGRAPHY

AANKHEN	1950
ADA	1951
AAS	1953
VACHAN	1955
ALBELI	1955
NARSI BHAGAT	1957
EK SAAL	1958
NAI RAAHEN	1959
CHIRAG KAHAN ROSHANI KAHAN	1959
PYAAR KA SAGAR	1961
DOOR KI AWAZ	1964
DUS LAKH	1967
EK PHOOL DO MALI	1969
DHADKAN	1972
EK MAHAL HO SAPNO KA	1975
AADMI SADAK KA	1977

courage, as it was for his cinematic achievements. And Goel *sahab* is how he was universally referred to ever since.

The 1960s saw mainstream cinema go color. Films were more spectacular and more lavish - but with mixed results. It took filmmakers of sensibility and sensitivity to handle the larger, lusher canvas with discretion; to ensure that in bringing the spectacular to the screen, the soul of the film was not missed. His first colour film *Door Ki Awaz*, (starring Joy Mukherjee and Saira Banu) was an object lesson in handling the new visual riches now available to filmmakers, with taste and class. Yet *Door Ki Awaz*, despite its commercial success, did not entirely satisfy Goel *sahab*. In his own opinion, the larger more spectacular version of cinema, contained within it an inherent tendency to reduce a film director from an artist to an artisan. A mid-career pause for reflection, *Door Ki Awaz* would mark a turning point in Goel

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sahab's career, from which he would emerge more focused and in command of the film, than ever. That said, *Door Ki Awaz* had its share of quintessentially Devendra Goel passages. The children's birthday song 'Hum bhi agar bachey hotey...', a lavishly mounted production-number, remains a perennially popular song, still played at birthday parties of children whose parents themselves danced to the song in their own childhood.



Pyaar Ka Sagar - 1961



Dus Lakh - 1967



By the mid-1960s Goel *sahab* was approaching the peak of his creative powers. It was a time when he could virtually do no wrong; no challenge was too big for him. Going against the film industry trend of large starcast magnum opuses, Goel *sahab* began his next film with yet another fresh lead pair, Sanjay Khan and Babita, and based his script on strong supporting characters instead. The film was *Dus Lakh* and the key role belonged to veteran actors Om Prakash and Pran. Not only did *Dus Lakh* go on to become an all-India box-office smasher, firmly putting Sanjay Khan and Babita on to the stardom fastrack, Om Prakash himself won an award for best comedian. Yet another award was garnered by Asha Bhonsle for her version of the film's hit title-song 'Garibon ki suno...'. And then, on the ninth of May 1969, Devendra Goel presented to the audiences of India and the growing world-market, his greatest cinematic masterpiece - *Ek Phool Do Mali*. Bringing together many of the themes that had preoccupied the director in Goel Sahab during his long career, *Ek Phool Do Mali* was the last word in high emotional drama, with its rivetting story of a child torn between two fathers - and a woman between her first love and her marital loyalty. Shot extensively at high altitudes and sub-zero temperatures in the mountains of Kashmir - an area incidentally, where civilians were denied access without special clearances - the visual beauty of the film stunned audiences across the country who had never seen anything quite like it in their lives. There was no box-office record safe from the *Ek Phool Do Mali* juggernaut. It not only was the biggest hit of its time in India, it went on to single handedly create a market for Hindi films in the Middle-East. And while its three lead stars Sadhana, Sanjay Khan and Balraj Sahni, all reaped huge career-boosts, with Balraj Sahni winning an award, it was the child star of the film, 'wonder-child Bobby' who stole the show and became the darling of millions. The nation sang, along with leading man Sanjay Khan, 'O nanhe se farishte...'

The 70s found Goel *sahab* eager to tackle fresh themes. His next film *Dhadkan* was a story on the subject of reincarnation. Unlike the rebirth stories seen upto then, with a focus on eternal love, *Dhadkan* was a darker, more aggressive story focusing on a betrayal that ends in murder, and revenge and retribution accorded after the victim's rebirth. *The Reincarnation of Peter Proud*, an English film which was made later coincidentally had almost exactly the same story as *Dhadkan*. Ironically, after the release of *Peter Proud*. The musical tradition of Goel Cine Corporation re-emerged with Goel *sahab*'s next film *Ek Mahal Ho Sapnon Ka*. A multistarrer with Dharmendra, Sharmila Tagore, Leena Chandavarkar and Ashok Kumar leading its starcast, *Ek Mahal Ho Sapnon Ka* was the first and regrettably only time that the triumvirate of Devendra Goel, music-director Ravi and poet-extraordinaire Sahir Ludhianvi joined hands. And what a musical score they produced! 'Dekha hai zindagi ko...', 'Dil main kisi ke pyaar ka...' and the title track itself 'Ek mahal ho sapnon ka...', all were chart-toppers. In an era when earlier musical standards were eroding, to be replaced by a more rhythm-oriented style of music, the success of *Ek Mahal Ho Sapnon Ka* songs was validation that melody will always triumph whatever the era.

Devendra Goel's final film *Aadmi Sadak Ka* was a worthy summing up of a spectacular film-making career. Starring Shatrughan Sinha as the eponymous *aadmi sadak ka* or man-of-the-street, it presented the theme of dignity of labour - a theme that is not the easiest to handle without turning a film into a preachy and moralistic exercise. Not a problem though, for a master storyteller. Weaving into it a story of a joint-family and its ups and downs, Goel *sahab* handled the complex family-cum-revenge drama with all the assurance of his experience and talent. And once again the film, as well as its music proved a winner. No wedding in India ever takes place without the delightful Shatrughan Sinha number 'Aaj mere yaar ki shaadi hai...' February 26, 1978 was the day that Goel *sahab*'s voice was stilled for ever, his smile finally faded out. It was all too soon; he was still in his 50s - active, healthy and bubbling with ideas for future projects. The loss to film audiences everywhere, deprived of perhaps another dozen high quality films in as era of forgettable Hollywood counterfeits, is difficult to quantify. But as Goel *sahab* may have himself said, 'look at the bright side.' There are a dozen - and more - films that can be enjoyed and savoured again and again, by generations of audiences still to come. While Goel *sahab*'s own smile may now only be a memory, his films will ensure smiles - and tears too - from audiences across barriers of time and distance.



Dharkan - 1972



Ek Mahal Ho Sapnon Ka - 1975



Aadmi Sadak Ka - 1977

The musical tradition of
Goel Cine Corporation
re-emerged with Goel
sahab's *Ek Mahal
Ho Sapnon Ka*